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seven or eight times pretty quick, and then stops for a time; but the second will beat some hours together without intermission; and the strokes are more leisurely, and liker the beat of a watch. This insect, which has been long known under the name of the death watch, has been noticed by Linn. System Nat., p. 1015, No. 2. Geoffry, however, says, he is confident that it is not from this insect, but from the *dermes domesticus* (Syst. Nat. p. 563, No. 12), which makes the circular holes in furniture, that the ticking proceeds; and Dr. Shaw assures us, the insect, properly called the death watch, is a *colcopterous* insect of the genus *ptinus* (Syst. Nat. p. 565). This accurate naturalist who distinguished the insect by the name of *ptinus fatidicus* the beating *ptinus*, and supposes it to be the same with the *dermestes tessellatus* of Fabricius, and *ptinus pulsator* of Gmelin. Notwithstanding all this, the first two here described, are generally allowed to be the real death watches; the one beating only a few strokes at a time, but the other beating for hours together, and without intermission. On the whole, it appears, that what has so long given alarm to many a feeling heart, but superstitious head, is nothing but an insect!!

A well known satirist sports with the superstitions respecting this insect, in the following lines:

"A wood-worm
That lies in old wood, like a hare in her form,
With teeth or with claws it will bite or will scratch,
And chambermaids christen this worm a *Death-watch*,
Because, like the watch, it always cries click;
Then woe be to those in the house who are sick,
For, sure as a gun, they will give up the ghost,
If the maggot cries click when it scratches the post."

J. GETTY.

Ballymena.

READY METHODS OF ACQUIRING KNOWLEDGE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE DUBLIN PENNY JOURNAL.

SIR—That we live in most fortunate times for the ready acquisition of knowledge, and the speedy attainment of perfection in every science which it is possible for the human mind to comprehend, I should suppose not even one of your 30,000 readers will attempt to deny. However, should the natural perverseness of a contracted mind tempt any individual to dispute my hypothesis, I am sure, Sir, you will at once agree with me, that it must be owing to some deficiency or obliquity of intellect—for who that has for a moment contemplated the various systems which have in recent years been introduced into the moral machinery of this our lower world, for cutting short the pathway of knowledge, and rendering easy and smooth those formidable acclivities which in the days of our forefathers presented them with such difficulties in their endeavours to climb the hill of science, and to scale the heights of honour and of fame, but must at once admit my assertion to be correct. Not to dwell upon those inferior helps by which in the present day professors *peculiarly qualified* to fulfil the task, engage to impart a perfect knowledge of any foreign language, with a correct pronunciation, in the very agreeable period of twenty-four lessons of one hour each; while an elegant and fashionable style of writing may be acquired in half that space of time; a new system of education has just been discovered, by which children can learn three tongues in two lessons, as easily as a magpie is taught one language by splitting its tongue into two. Upon which principle, it will be perceived, all the languages of the world may be acquired in six or eight weeks. But besides all these, Sir, we have, as you are aware, the delightful science of Mnemonics, by which the youth of the present era are saved all the trouble of bringing their thinking powers into requisition, or of cramming their skulls with those vulgar rules of syntax and prosody, which in the less enlightened ages of the creation were had recourse to by such plodding animals as Johnson and Murray. But more than all these, Sir, for though "last not least," we are now enabled by the aid of human ingenuity, and the indefatigable exertions of a few persevering individuals, in whose craniums, as they themselves would say, the organ of *ideality* has been strongly developed, to know at the

very moment of the birth of our children, the particular trade, profession, science, or calling, for which they are intended by nature; and are thus saved the trouble and expense of endeavouring to force knowledge into a part of the skull in which it is evident it was never intended that any portion of brains should reside; and where consequently, as there is no space in which knowledge ought to be deposited, an exertion to impart instruction would be worse than labour lost. It is surely a happy circumstance that in times like the present, when money is so scarce, and trade so depressed, that such a science should be thus gaining the perfection which its professors assure us it is doing. But here, Sir, as your Journal is the friend of *antiquarianism*, I trust you will pardon my saying that in my opinion, the present professors of phrenology have no just claim to all the merit which they would assume to themselves for having discovered the science, as I am confident it could readily be shown that it was well known to the ancients. The simple line, "*poeta nascitur non fit*," to my mind makes it quite evident—"a poet is born not made,"—the very principle upon which the phrenologists of the present day hang their theory; who tell us that one man is born or fitted by nature to be a dancing master or fencer, while the proportions of another is that of a watchmaker or joiner. I say, Mr. Editor, it appears to me quite plain from the above line, and I am sure many of your antiquarian readers will agree with me that it furnishes good reason to believe that the ancients were not altogether ignorant of the science of skulls.

But, Sir, I have still stronger proof on this point, it appears to me that in many of the temples of antiquity the science of phrenology was regularly inculcated, especially in that one over the entrance of which was inscribed "*man know thyself*;" for in what readier way could this be done than by carefully comparing their own skulls with those of their neighbours, and the great men of former days. Indeed there is a strong confirmation of this theory, in the fact related by modern travellers, that in the immediate vicinity of the ruins of those once stately edifices, numbers of human and other skulls have been discovered, which any regular antiquarian must at once admit it is only reasonable to suppose were used by the lecturers on the science in the course of their various demonstrations. I find, however, I have been detaining you and your readers, too long with any antiquarian researches, and shall therefore pass on to consider a few more of the means that we possess in the present day, for the attainment of knowledge—and the next I would notice is that supplied by the *power of steam*, by which literary works are multiplied *ad infinitum*;* and in this department, it is only fair to assume that in a short time the same principle will be applied to the manufacture of editors and authors, which is so general with regard to their works. At present the calculation of every imaginable question in arithmetic is executed by machinery; square roots are worked by a cylinder; circles discovered by a wheel; and infinite forms by a screw; and who can take it upon him to say that iron and steam are not calculated to supply every deficiency that may exist, in the component parts still necessary for an editor or an author. Having thus fully demonstrated the proposition with which I set out, I shall for the present take my leave, wishing your Penny publication the success which it merits, and am

Yours truly,

PETER PINDAR, JUN.

* In reference to the observation of our friend Peter, we may mention, that but for "the power of steam" applied to the PENNY JOURNAL, it must have been allowed to perish like many of its predecessors, as it was found impossible to bring it out in time with the common presses; having been enabled, however, to compete with our English and Scotch friends by working our Journal with a machine which will throw off as many copies in one day as a common press would in twenty, we are determined, in future, to carry it on in such a way as to prevent the chance of disappointment or delay. This one fact we have mentioned speaks more forcibly in favour of the use of machinery, than one thousand theoretical arguments.

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